

Members:

Rep. William Bailey, Chairperson
Rep. Rolland Webber
Rep. Robert Alderman
Sen. Thomas Wyss
Sen. Allen Paul
Sen. William Alexa
Sen. Allie Craycraft



Lay Members:

Terry Smith
John Dahman
James Brown
David Miller

LSA Staff:

Timothy Tyler, Attorney for the Commission
Mark Bucherl, Fiscal Analyst for the Commission

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MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

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MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: June 30, 1998
Meeting Time: 1:30 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. William Bailey, Chairperson; Rep. Rolland Webber; Rep. Robert Alderman; Sen. Thomas Wyss; Sen. Allen Paul; Sen. Allie Craycraft; Terry Smith; John Dahman; James Brown; David Miller.

Members Absent: Sen. William Alexa.

Representative William Bailey, chairperson of the Military and Veterans Affairs Commission (MVAC), called the meeting to order at 1:39 p.m. Representative Bailey stated that it was his intention to hold three MVAC meetings during the 1998 interim.

The first issue discussed by the MVAC was Senate Bill 463-1998 concerning tuition exemptions for relatives of certain veterans. (SB 463-1998, as introduced, would have specified that the following persons would be eligible to receive tuition exemptions as the relatives of veterans: (1) A person who is a pupil at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home if the person was admitted to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home because the person was related to a member of the armed forces of the United States. (2) A person whose mother or father served in the armed forces of the United States if the mother or father received the Purple Heart decoration or was wounded as a result of enemy action and received any discharge or separation from the armed forces other than a dishonorable discharge. (3) A person whose mother or father served in the armed forces of the United States before July 1, 1998, during any war or performed duty equally hazardous that was recognized by the award of a service or

campaign medal of the United States if the mother or father suffered a service connected death or disability and received any discharge or separation from the armed forces other than a dishonorable discharge. SB 463-1998, as introduced, would have also provided that: (1) a person may not receive a tuition exemption unless the person is eligible to pay the resident tuition rate at the college or university the person will attend as determined by the college or university and possesses the requisite academic qualifications; and (2) the tuition exemption is for 124 semester credit hours.)

William Jackson, Director of the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs, presented a brief legislative history of SB 463-1998. He stated the bill went to a Conference Committee at the end of the 1998 Session and the Conference Committee Report was adopted in the Senate but not in the House of Representatives. Mr. Jackson said the issues in SB 463-1998 still warrant attention by the Indiana General Assembly.

Representative Bailey stated a new draft of SB 463-1998, as introduced, would be considered at the third MVAC meeting.

The next issue the MVAC considered was the Indiana National Guard tuition reimbursement program. (Legislation endorsed by the MVAC in 1997 would have established the Indiana National Guard tuition reimbursement program to allow an enlisted person, a warrant officer, or a commissioned officer who is a member in good standing of the Indiana National Guard to receive reimbursement for tuition and other compensable charges for not more than six hours of credits per semester or quarter at any accredited state supported college or university in Indiana.)

When Representative Bailey discovered that a representative was not present from either the Indiana National Guard or the Governor's office, he stated that the issue would be continued until the next meeting. Mr. Jackson stated that he thought there would be an attempt to incorporate the program into the next state budget. Representative Bailey stated that the MVAC would have to be made aware of what the Administration's "game plan" would be before the MVAC could officially endorse the tuition reimbursement program.

The next issue discussed by the MVAC was SB 130-1998 concerning grave markers for members of the armed forces. (SB 130-1998, as introduced, would have required the State Board of Funeral and Cemetery Service to establish standards before January 1, 1999, for setting a grave marker provided by the federal government to a member of the armed forces or other qualified person. These standards would have required a person who sets a grave marker to do so in the most economical manner possible.)

Ro Whittington, President of the Indiana Cemetery Association, stated that her association had been able to work out problems concerning this issue and did not think additional government regulation was necessary. She said it would be necessary to establish more than one standard for setting these markers because there were different types of markers and different types of cemetery landscaping. She said the issues concerning these grave markers could be worked out privately without the need for legislation.

Ms. Whittington continued by saying that if the General Assembly thought legislation was necessary, the only changes she proposed involved specifying that military markers would be used to mark unmarked graves, military markers would have to be set in the same manner as similar nonmilitary markers, and any fee charged for setting the military markers could not be greater than the fee charged for setting similar nonmilitary markers.

Senator Wyss stated that there were still problems, either real or perceived, concerning the setting of these grave markers. He said that SB 130-1998 would have allowed for the establishment of more than one standard for setting the markers. He also stated that he might introduce legislation in 1999 concerning this issue even if the MVAC did not want to officially endorse a specific bill.

Representative Bailey then stated that legislation may be necessary "to focus the issues." He asked representatives from the Indiana Cemetery Association to be prepared to discuss proposed legislation at a future MVAC meeting.

The next issue discussed by the MVAC concerned renaming part of a highway in Lake County for Indiana Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Emilio De La Garza.

After a brief discussion, Representative Bailey stated that the discussion of the issue would be continued at the next meeting. He asked Mr. Jackson to provide the members of MVAC with a list of all Congressional Medal of Honor winners from World War I to the present who were residents of Indiana when they enlisted in the military or were drafted. Representative Bailey asked the MVAC members to consider giving the governing bodies of local units of government the authority to rename streets for Congressional Medal of Honor winners instead of establishing a state program that would mandate that specific streets be renamed for these veterans.

Representative Bailey then asked if there were any further issues anyone wanted the MVAC to consider during the 1998 interim.

After a brief discussion, Representative Bailey stated that at its next meeting the MVAC would reconsider past legislation concerning payment of a bonus to Indiana veterans of Desert Storm and past legislation concerning the display of the POW/MIA flag. He also stated the MVAC would discuss the possibility of drafting a resolution to urge that monuments to Indiana veterans located in other states be inspected and refurbished if necessary.

The MVAC then discussed H.R. 3710 introduced in the United States House of Representatives to exonerate the late Rear Admiral Charles Butler McVay III, captain of the U.S.S. Indianapolis when it was sunk on July 30, 1945, from responsibility for that sinking. The members of the MVAC voted 10 to nothing to have a letter prepared for the next MVAC meeting indicating MVAC support for H.R. 3710 to be signed by all the members of the MVAC and sent to all the Indiana members of Congress.

Representative Bailey then stated that the next MVAC meeting would take place on Wednesday, July 22, 1998, at 1:30 p.m. Representative Bailey adjourned the meeting at 2:34 p.m.